

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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INTERIOR PROPOSES FINAL REGS FOR 15 ALASKA MONUMENTS; 90-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT

Proposed regulations for administration of 15 of the 17 new national monuments established in Alaska by President Carter December 1, 1978, are being published in the Federal Register June 28, Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus said today.

Involved are 13 National Park Service (NPS) and two Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) areas which include 53 million of Alaska's 375 million acres.

"Our goal is still the passage of sound comprehensive legislation to settle the Alaska lands issue," Secretary Andrus said. "Until such a law is passed, however, we must regulate activities in these areas in accord with their status as national monuments and reflecting their outstanding natural, scientific, historic, and cultural values.

"We will make a state-wide 90-day effort to obtain public comment before the regulations are final," Andrus said.

Reflecting the unique character of the national monuments and the circumstances under which they were established, in general the regulations will open both NPS and FWS monuments to fixed-wing aircraft, traditional use of snowmobiles, fishing and subsistence hunting. The FWS monuments will also be open to sport hunting, Secretary Andrus said.

"Differences in approach from similar units in other areas of the Nation were designed specifically to provide the flexibility necessary to deal with the unique Alaskan lifestyle and environment," Secretary Andrus said.

Every effort was made to standardize the regulations proposed for the National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service monuments, the Secretary said. Differences in use, terrain, and management philosophy required a different regulatory approach in some cases. Highlights include:

- Both NPS and FWS monuments are open to fishing.
- Both FWS and NPS monuments are open to subsistence hunting, including use of snowmobiles for access. In order to differentiate in NPS monuments, where sport hunting is not allowed, a system of resident zones is established to identify subsistence users.
- FWS monuments will be open to sport hunting and commercial trapping.
- Firearms may generally be carried in both FWS and NPS monuments.

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-- All monuments will be open to the exercise of valid existing rights.

-- FWS monuments will be open to snowmobiling and NPS monuments will be open to snowmobiling on designated routes and areas.

-- All monuments will be open for the continued use of fixed-wing aircraft except where specifically closed.

"The public needs not only to know what rules will govern the administration of these areas and to have the fullest opportunity to shape the final version of these regulations which may directly impact the lives of many people," Secretary Andrus said.

"We are providing a 90-day period for public comment and during that period every effort will be made to contact all interested groups and individuals for their suggestions. We will use a number of methods, including open public hearings, and interviews to assure full public participation in the shaping of the final regulations."

To meet the immediate need for public use guidelines, emergency interim regulations for the management of the areas were published December 26, 1978. These regulations will remain in effect until the proposed regulations being announced today are issued in final form, probably in late November this year.

The Interior Department sought public comment on concepts to be addressed in the proposed and final regulations last February through a "Notice of Intent" published in the Federal Register and widely publicized. These proposed regulations set out a far more comprehensive and detailed regulatory framework than in either the emergency regulations or the concepts set forth in the "Notice of Intent." They reflect public comments received to date.

Written comments should be addressed to the Area Directors of the FWS and NPS in Alaska within 90 days as follows: Area Director, National Park Service, 540 W. 5th Ave., Anchorage, AK. 99501; and Area Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 E. Tudor Rd., Anchorage, AK. 99507.

The 15 new Alaska national monuments managed by the Interior Department are: Aniakchak NM (350,000 acres); Bering Land Bridge NM (2.6 million acres); Cape Krusenstern NM (560,000 acres); Denali NM (enlargement of Mount McKinley National Park 3.9 million acres); Gates of the Arctic NM (8.2 million acres); Glacier Bay NM (enlargement 550,000 acres); Katmai NM (enlargement 1.4 million acres); Kenai Fjords NM (570,000 acres); Kobuk Valley NM (1.7 million acres); Lake Clark NM (2.5 million acres); Noatak NM (5.8 million acres); Wrangell-St. Elias NM (11 million acres); Yukon-Charley NM (1.7 million acres); Yukon Flats NM (10.6 million acres); Becharof NM (1.2 million acres).

Yukon Flats and Becharof are managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service, all others by the National Park Service.

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